Fire in Coal mines

37. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact hat out of the 70 identified mine fires, only 5 fires have been extinguished and 6 fires have been controlled at an expenditure of Rs. 73 crores out of a total estimated cost of Rs. 114 crores earmarked for 70 mines fires; if so, the reasons therefor;

(b) what is the status of the remaining 59 fires;

(c) in what manner Government propose to tacvle these fires not only to save destruction of coal reserve but also for removing health hazards of the people living around those areas as well as to reduce th environmental problem in Jharia Coal Belt;

(d) whether it is a fact that equipments provided for fire fighting has since been used for normal coal production without maintaining any account; and

(e) whether any responsibility has been fixed for this gross mis-management and negligence in tackllng the fire problem, if so the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) to (c) An expenditure of about Rs. 73 crores out of a total estimated cost of Rs. 114 crores covering 22 projects to deal with the Jharia Coalfield fires was incurred on dealing with most of the fire sites. As a result of the efforts made five fires have been extinguished and a further spread of six has been controlled/contained. The fire fighting efforts are continuing through application of methods and techniques already being tried to deal with these fires. In view of the seriousness of the problem of fires in Jharia Coalfield and the difficulties coming in the way of extinguishing these fires with the available methods/technologies, the Government have been making efforts to seek technical assistance from other countries. The World Bank has since agreed to provide financial and technical assistance for a diagnostic study for development programme to deal with the coalfield fires. An IDA credit of US $ 12 million has been approved for the technical assistance of the work. The diagnostic study will also identify the social as well as environmental hazards to the people living in and around the fire affected areas of Jharia Coalfield. The diagnostic study will cover all the fire sites of Jharia Coalfield.

(d) and (e) Fire projects generally require Heavy Earth Moving Machinery (HEMM) and by the very nature of fire control operations, use of such machinery is only intermittent. Since such machinery can also be used for removal of overburden and production in opencast mines, these are gainfully deployed in the idle period in neighbouring mines in the overall interest of better utilisa'ion of the equipment, hence question of mismanagement and negligence does not arise.

Coal Supply to Tamil Nadu State Electricity Board

38. SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) what is the quantum of coal supplied by the Coal India Ltd. to the Tamil Nadu State Electricity Board since April, 1993;

(b) whether it is a fact that Tamil Nadu State Electricity Board has decided to import two million tonnes of Coal involving foreign exchange of about Rs. 275 crores; and

(c) if so, what is Government's reaction in respect thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) The total quantity of coal supplied to power houses of